

PYQ Vault

560

questions

50

days

10

years of PYQs

DAY 35

The United Nations · 10 questions

Every question carries a **Flow Snapshot** — how the answer moves — and a handwritten model answer on the channel.

Work through all fifty days and no PYQ will be unfamiliar.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2016 · 15 marks

Do you endorse that the United Nations needs major changes in its structures and functioning? Suggest the changes for efficient improvements.

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** **Hammarskjöld's** minimum test (save humanity from hell) → Rwanda / Srebrenica / Darfur fall below even that → endorse major change
- R2** **Joel Ng:** legitimacy = representation + effectiveness → UN short on both → so structures and functioning both need change

Body flow

Council's composition frozen at 1945 → no permanent seat for Africa / Latin America → veto converts P5 rivalry into paralysis (Syria, Ukraine) → same fault runs into functioning: no standing army, borrowed troops, slow deployment, funding shortfalls → **Barnett:** reactive, not preventive → hence remedies on both tracks → **structure:** expand both categories (Africa, Latin America, India), **Annan's** 24-member plan, restrain the veto, greater decision-making weight for the General Assembly → **functioning:** peacekeeping → peacebuilding, quicker deployment, **Sachs** on merging/closing overlapping programmes, Secretariat transparency + independent oversight

Counter-view

Weiss: entrenched interests will not concede reform without a burden-sharing bargain → UN80 (2026): posts cut 21%, Council composition untouched → efficiency can be administered, representation must be conceded → **Guterres** himself: status quo "untenable"

Conclusion routes

- R1** **Vajpayee:** UN only as effective as members allow → reform begins at the top, in the Council, or the body goes moribund
- R2** managerial reform without Council reform leaves the veto intact → representation remains the test of a credible UN

Dag Hammarskjöld said the UN "was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell". Rwanda, Srebrenica and Darfur compelled an endorsement of major change.

Joel NG argues, legitimacy rests on representation & effectiveness; the UN is short on both. The fault lies in the Security Council, whose composition mirrors 1945. Whenever a PS interest is engaged, as in Syria & Ukraine, the council fails.

Functioning follows no standing army, borrowed troops, slow deployment, chronic funding shortfalls. Michael Barnett argues that the UN acts reactively instead of building preventive capacity.

Structurally, enlarge both categories of membership to seat Africa, Latin America and India, taking Kofi Annan's 24-member plan as the base.

Restrain the veto, and give the General Assembly greater decision-making weight.

Jeffery Sachs would merge or close overlapping programmes; the secretariat needs transparency & independent oversight.

Thomas Weir cautions that entrenched interests will not concede this without a bargain on burden-sharing. The UN80 Initiative shows the limit. Secretariat posts are down 21% in 2026, but the council's composition is untouched and Antonio Guterres calls the status quo "untenable".

As Atal Bihari Vajpayee said, "the UN can only be as effective as its members allow it to be." Reform must begin at the top, in the Council, or the body goes moribund.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2017 · 15 marks

Do you agree with the view that despite the limitations in the functioning of the UN, it has distinguished and unique achievements to its credit?

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** **Hammarskjöld's** yardstick (save from hell, not carry to heaven) → judged so, agree → limits and achievements share one root
- R2** UN acts only as far as members permit → failures = members', achievements = organisation's → hence "unique"

Body flow

collective security rests on great-power unanimity → one veto cancels it → Cold War paralysis → failure wherever P5 interest engaged (Rwanda, Srebrenica, Syria) → **Pillay**: narrow national interest above human suffering → no army, no assured funds → **turn**: where members did not obstruct → decolonisation (80 members, 750 mn) → human-rights law (UDHR 1948 → Covenants 1966) → more law in seven decades than all earlier history → peacekeeping (172 settlements) → non-political record strongest of all → *proves the block is political, not institutional*

Counter-view

a body that can be bypassed and starved owns only permitted achievements → **Gowan**: dangerous dependence on two paying members (US, China) → UN80, May 2026: status quo untenable

Conclusion routes

- R1** **Hanhimäki**: far from flawless, but the forum's legitimacy has no substitute → that legitimacy is the unique achievement
- R2** agree — limits owned by members, achievements by the organisation → reform, not replacement, is the honest verdict

Dag Hammarskjöld states the UN "was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell". Its limits & achievements grow from one root i.e. a universal body acts as far as its members allow.

Collective security rests on great-power unanimity as one veto cancels it. Navi Pillay argues that narrow national interest had "repeatedly taken precedence over intolerable human suffering". It commands no army and no assured funds.

Where they did not obstruct, the record has no parallel. 80 present members were colonies in 1945; 750 million people won freedom.

It built the modern law of human rights, from the Universal Declaration of 1948 to the Covenants of 1966, producing more international law in 7 decades than in all earlier history. Its non-political work, refugees, health, hunger, the SDGs, is stronger because states rarely block it there.

Critics argued that a body which can be bypassed owns only permitted achievements. Richard Gowan finds the UN dangerously dependent on two paying members, the US & China; Guterres's UNDO report of May 2026 calls the status quo untenable.

Jussi Hanhimäki observes, the UN is far from flawless, but the forum it supplies carries a legitimacy no other body can. That legitimacy is its unique achievement.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2018 · 20 marks

Discuss the relevance of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on the security of women in conflict zones.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 31 Oct 2000, adopted unanimously → first time women's safety in war treated as international peace and security, not welfare → line: relevance = the standard it set, not the protection delivered

R2 security once written around states and soldiers → 1325 shifted the referent to women in conflict → same line: it is a norm, not an enforcement instrument

Body flow

Enloe's "where are the women?" finally put to the Council → four pillars: participation, protection, prevention, relief and recovery → women as peacemakers, not only victims → architecture built: 1820 (2008) sexual violence as tactic of war; 100+ national action plans; India's all-female FPU, Liberia 2007 → ground record thin: **Coomaraswamy's** *Global Study* — single digits in peace talks → SG's 2025 report: 7% negotiators, nine of ten tracks with none; 676 million women in conflict areas → Afghanistan, Sudan, Gaza → no enforcement → **Pillay**: geopolitics beats suffering

Counter-view

Otto: feminist ideas absorbed as the Council's symbolic capital → selective engagement, no accountability, protective stereotypes returning through the language of protection

Conclusion routes

R1 critique holds, but 1325 not redundant → 46% of Council decisions (2025), lowest since 2009 → that retreat is itself measured against 1325 → relevance is normative, and rises as compliance falls

R2 25 years on, 1325's power lies in naming, not enforcing → it made women's exclusion visible, and so chargeable → the resolution outlives its own weak record

Adopted unanimously on 31 October 2000, Resolution 1325 was the first time the UNSC treated the safety of women in war as a question of international peace & security, not of welfare.

Its relevance lies less in the protection it has delivered than in the standard it set, against which the council is judged. Security until then was written around states & soldiers. Cynthia Enloe's question, where are the women, was finally put to the Council.

Resolution 1820 (2008) treated sexual violence as a tactic of war; over a 100 states adopted national action plans. India sent the first all-female police unit to Liberia in 2007.

Radhika Coomaraswamy's Global study (2015) found women's share in peace talks stuck in single digits.

The secretary - General's 2025 report puts women at 7% of negotiators in 2024, with nearly 9 of 10 negotiation tracks including none, while 676 million women lived in conflict areas. Navi Pillay states that "short-term geopolitical considerations and national interest" take precedence over human suffering.

Dianne Otto argues the Council has taken feminist ideas as symbolic capital, engaging selectively, avoiding accountability, & letting protective stereotypes of women return through the language of protection.

The critique is fair, but it does not make 1325 redundant. By civil society count, only 46% of Council decisions in 2025 referred to the agenda, the lowest since 2009. The retreat is measured against 1325.

25 years on, its relevance is normative as it keeps exclusion of women visible and therefore chargeable.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 10 marks

In what way does the predominance of the USA in the UN funding affect its decision-making?

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** one member, one vote whatever it pays → US at the 22% ceiling + nearly 27% of peacekeeping → influence travels through the budget, not the ballot
- R2** Charter gives no weighted vote → so leverage is built outside the rules → through assessments, arrears, earmarked funds

Body flow

1986 Kassebaum-Solomon threat → Assembly gives way → Res. 41/213 → Fifth Committee to seek "broadest possible agreement" = consensus in practice → informal budget veto without any weighted vote → **Mearsheimer**: institutions mirror the distribution of power → withholding/arrears → Secretariat kept short of cash → earmarked money → agencies follow donor priorities

Counter-view

votes stay outside the purse: Jerusalem, 128–9 (2017) → and the leverage is not costless to Washington itself

Conclusion routes

- R1** the purse settles what the UN can afford to decide, not what it votes
- R2** **Patz** (2026): structural political payment failure → 2026 budget down 7%, 2,900 posts cut → Washington now shapes the UN by shrinking it

The charter gives every member one vote, whatever it pays. But the US pays the 22% ceiling of the regular budget and nearly 27% of peacekeeping.

After the Kassebaum-Solomon amendment threatened to cut US dues unless big contributors got more say, the assembly gave way. Resolution 41/213 required the 5th Committee to seek the "broadest possible agreement", which in practice means consensus. The largest payer thus won a veto over the budget without a weighted vote. John Mearsheimer's point that institutions mirror the distribution of power holds.

Withholding does the rest as arrears keep the Secretariat short of cash and agencies fed by earmarked US money follow donor priorities.

Money does not buy votes : in 2017 the assembly overrode US on Jerusalem, 128-9. Now is the leverage costless.

Ronny Patz (2026) calls the present crisis as a structural political payment failure. US arrears have already forced the 2026 budget down 7%, with 2,900 posts cut.

Funding predominance decides what the UN can afford to do & Washington shapes the organisation by shrinking it.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 15 marks

Evaluate the role of the International Court of Justice in inter-State disputes.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** 1945, principal judicial organ → only forum where one state can sue another → writ bounded at both ends: consent at entry, veto at exit
- R2** judicial settlement as the alternative to force → but the Court decides only what states allow, and enforces nothing itself

Body flow

inside consent, the record is solid: impartial hearing (Jadhav) → territorial disputes settled (El Salvador–Honduras; Cameroon–Nigeria) → law-building (territorial waters, continental shelf) → then the structural limits: consent, not compulsion → judgment final and binding, but enforcement through the UNSC, veto available even to a state that consented → open non-compliance (US, Israel) + Global South charge of Western tilt → **Prabhash Ranjan**: Russia's veto shield, yet indifference does not lessen the law's importance → docket still filling (Myanmar merits, Jan 2026; Guyana–Venezuela, May 2026) → **McIntyre & Simpson**: standing widened under the Genocide Convention

Counter-view

"UN's least effective body," enforcement gap real → against this: the most far-reaching attempt at rule of law between states; at eighty, still the archetype of international adjudication

Conclusion routes

- R1** the Court fixes the legal terms on which states contest; it does not police power
- R2** authority real but conditional — the binding constraint is the veto, not the bench

Created in 1945 as the principal judicial organ of the UN, the International Court of Justice is the forum where one state can sue another. Its role turns on one condition: it decides only what states allow & enforces nothing itself.

It gives each side an impartial hearing, as when it asked Pakistan not to proceed with the execution of Kulbhushan Jadhav. It has closed territorial disputes between El Salvador and Honduras, & Cameroon, Nigeria and laid down principles states argue with, on territorial waters & the continental shelf.

The limits are structural. Jurisdiction rests on consent, not compulsion. Judgment is final and binding, but enforcement runs through the UNSC, where a permanent member can veto it, even when it consented to be bound.

The US & Israel have refused to comply ; developing countries see a Western tilt.

Prabhash Ranjan argues that Russia can veto enforcement of any ruling against it, though such indifference does not lessen the law's importance.

Juliette McIntyre and Adam Simpson argue that any party to the Genocide Convention may invoke another's responsibility.

Critics call it the UN's least effective body, and on enforcement they are right. Its worthy as it settles the legal terms on which states contest and at so it remains the archetype of international adjudication.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2020 · 20 marks

Discuss the significance and urgency of the UN Security Council reforms. Explain the relevance of the reforms proposals made by the UN Secretary- General Antonio Guterres for the developing countries.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 only organ whose decisions bind → seats still mirror 1945 → Council reform = the UN's authority → and it is the one thing **Guterres** cannot touch

R2 collective security rests on P5 unanimity → the powers of 1945 ≠ the powers of today → hence the UN's most needed reform is also its least achievable

Body flow

significance: Charter nucleus of the peace system; no democratisation while the strongest organ is unrepresentative; Africa and Latin America without permanent seats → urgency: Council fails wherever a P5 interest is engaged (Rwanda, Syria, Ukraine); **Tirkey** → archaic methods, Masood Azhar listing delayed a decade; weak states bear the cost → **Guterres's** proposals: three pillars — development system, peace and security architecture, Secretariat; DPPA + DPO under regional ASGs → **Barnett** → reactive UN prolongs suffering; the redesign answers this → relevance for developing countries: the gain lands where missions deploy and development money goes → present position: UN80 by 2026 largely austerity; **Gowan** → dependence on two assessed contributors

Counter-view

Ng → legitimacy = effectiveness + representation; **Guterres** supplies only the first → representation needs Charter amendment, guarded by the veto → Ezulwini and L69 claims for developing/small-island seats halt there

Conclusion routes

R1 relevant but incomplete: improves what the UN delivers to developing states, not what they decide *within* it

R2 administrative reform buys the Council time; without membership reform, every efficiency gain deepens dependence on the same few powers

The UNSC is the only UN organ whose decisions bind every member, but its permanent seats still mirror 1945. Reform there settles the authority of whole UN, and it is the one thing Guterres cannot reach.

The Charter makes the Council the nucleus of the peace system, so the UN cannot be democratised while its strongest organ stays unrepresentative.

The urgency comes from failure. When a permanent member's interest is engaged, the council does not act: Rwanda, Syria, now Ukraine. Aarshi Tiwari states the cost of archaic methods: Chinese obstruction held up Masood Azhar's listing for nearly a decade.

Guterres rebuilt what a Secretary-General can reach: the development system, the peace & security architecture & the Secretariat.

Michael Barnett, in *Empire of Humanity*, faults a UN that reacts instead of preventing; the redesign answers him. Its gain falls where missions deploy and development money goes. Richard Gowan points that a system leaning dangerously on two assessed contributors, the USA and China.

The legitimacy, Joel Ng holds, needs effectiveness & representation together, and the South lacks the second across the system. Efficiency is the Secretary-General's to give; representation needs charter amendment, which every permanent member can veto. Ezulwini and the L69's demand for developing & small-island seats stop there.

For developing countries the proposals are relevant but incomplete. They improve what the UN gives these states and leave their standing untouched in the organ that decides war and peace.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2021 · 10 marks

What measures have been undertaken by the United Nations for its reforms?

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 reform has been steady but uneven → change came where the P5 did not have to consent; stalled where they did

R2 restructuring debate running since the Council's Heads of Government met, 31 January 1992 → aim: a more democratic, effective, responsive UN → measures follow that aim

Body flow

enlargement first: membership 51 (1945) → 193, mostly 1960s decolonisation → UNSC non-permanent seats 6 → 10 (1963) → negotiations on working methods/representation continue → system broadened: UNDP, UNICEF, WFP → development track: **Kofi Annan's** coherence reforms (1990s) → 2030 Agenda + SDGs replace MDGs → rights track: Human Rights Council replaces Commission on Human Rights (2006) → latest: **Guterres's** three-area restructuring (development system / peace and security architecture / management) → political and peacebuilding affairs split from peace operations

Counter-view

the core is untouched → 2005 World Summit Outcome Document sought a representative Council, no unanimity → Charter amendment needs two-thirds of the Assembly + two-thirds of the Council including every permanent member → **Weiss**: entrenched interests block reform

Conclusion routes

R1 machinery reformed; Council composition and the veto await political agreement

R2 reform incremental and glacial → direction clear (a Council reflecting contemporary power), but major-power rivalry keeps it slow

Reform of the UN has been steady but uneven. Change came where the permanent 5 did not have to consent & stalled where they did.

Membership rose from 51 states in 1945 to 193, mostly through 1960s decolonisation, and UNSC's non-permanent seats went from six to ten in 1963; negotiations on working methods & representation continue.

New agencies & programmes broadened the system. UNDP, UNICEF, WFP. Kofi Annan's coherence reforms of the 1990s tied the development system together; the 2030 Agenda & SDGs replaced the MDGs.

The latest is Antonio Guterres's restructuring of 3 areas: the development system, the peace and security architecture & management splitting political & peacebuilding affairs from peace operations.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome document sought a more representative council, but charter amendment needs two-thirds of the Assembly & of the council, including permanent members.

Thomas G. Weiss holds that entrenched interests block reform. The machinery has been reformed; Council composition and the veto await political agreement.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2021 · 15 marks

Discuss the 'Sustainable Development Goals' as set by the United Nations.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** Charter's development pledge → most UN resources sit here, not in peace operations → well-being as precondition of lasting peace → SDGs = fullest expression of that pledge + its hardest test
- R2** UN has taken on tasks its founders never anticipated → 2030 Agenda + collective climate action → sustainable development now the accepted approach → SDGs as the pledge's present form, and its hardest test

Body flow

sustainable development defined (economic opportunity + social well-being + environmental protection) → paradigm widened (human rights, good governance, advancement of women) → Millennium Summit 2000 → 8 measurable, time-bound MDGs for 2015 → 2030 Agenda → 17 SDGs, formally adopted 1 January 2016 → supporting architecture: Addis Ababa (financing) / Paris (climate) / Sendai (disaster risk) → record: extreme poverty cut; ~80 million people fed and aided across 80 countries

Counter-view

SDGs vs low finance + global economic shocks → COVID-19 deepened inequalities; no equitable vaccine distribution → **Sachs**: voluntary pledges, not binding commitments → capacity limited in existential crises → remedy: new SDG-linked programmes

Conclusion routes

- R1 Hanhimäki**: far from flawless, yet makes it possible for the poor to improve their situation → goals supply a common measure of progress
- R2** the design is not the weakness, the delivery is → 2030 turns on finance and political will, not on the goals

Most of the UN's resources go not to peace but to the Charter's pledge to "promote higher standards of living, full employment & conditions of economic & social progress and development," on the premise that such well-being is a precondition for lasting peace.

The SDGs are the fullest expression of that pledge & its hardest test. The accepted approach today is sustainable development: growth that combines economic opportunity, social well-being & environmental protection, with human rights, good governance & the advancement of women brought into the same paradigm.

The Millennium Summit of 2000 produced the Millennium Development Goals, 8 measurable, time-bound goals for 2015. Three agreements of that year support it: the Addis Ababa action agenda on financing, the Paris Agreement on climate and the Sendai framework on disaster risk reduction.

The MDGs did cut extreme poverty, & the UN today feeds & aids some 80 million people in 80 countries. The SDGs, though, struggle with low finance & economic shocks, and COVID-19 deepened inequalities as the organisation could not ensure equitable vaccine distribution. Jeffrey Sachs argues that reliance on voluntary pledges rather than binding commitments limits its capacity in existential crises; he would create new SDG-linked programmes.

According to Jussi M. Hanhimäki, the UN is far from flawless, but it makes it possible for the poor to improve their situation. The goals supply a common measure of progress; meeting them by 2030 depends on finance & political will.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2022 · 15 marks

Describe the composition of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Discuss its voluntary jurisdiction.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** principal judicial organ, 1945, The Hague → bench built to represent the world → jurisdiction reaches only as far as states allow
- R2** composition is universal, jurisdiction is consensual → the Court's reach is fixed by states, not by its bench

Body flow

fifteen judges / no two from same state / nine years / elected by General Assembly + Security Council voting separately / five seats every three years → bench must represent principal legal systems + main forms of civilization → hence the claim to speak for international society → but no compulsory jurisdiction → consent routes: party to the Statute / acceptance under conditions / referral → two heads: contentious (states) + advisory (UN organs, specialised agencies) → within consent the grip is firm: final, binding, no appeal → Kulbhushan Jadhav order to Pakistan

Counter-view

the same consent is the weakness → states may refuse jurisdiction → enforcement runs through the UNSC, permanent member can veto → US and Israel non-compliance → **Prabhash Ranjan**: over Ukraine, Russia can veto enforcement against itself

Conclusion routes

- R1** consent loosens the grip exactly where the stakes are highest → still the archetype of international adjudication
- R2** representative bench + consensual jurisdiction → the most far-reaching attempt yet to apply the rule of law between states

Created in 1945 under the UN charter, the ICTJ is the UN's principal judicial organ, seated at the Hague. Its bench is built to represent the world and its jurisdiction reaches only as far as states allow.

The Court has 15 judges, no two from the same state, elected for 9 years by the General Assembly & the UNSC voting separately, 5 seats falling vacant every 3 years. The bench "as a whole must represent the principal legal systems of the world & the main forms of civilization." Composition gives the Court its claim to speak for international society.

The Court has no compulsory jurisdiction; it hears a dispute only when states consent, as parties to the statute, by accepting jurisdiction under certain conditions, or by referring a dispute to it. Two heads follow i.e. contentious cases between states and advisory opinions for UN organs and specialised agencies.

Consent, once given carries weight. Judgment is final, binding on the parties and without appeal, as the order to Pakistan not to proceed with Kulbhushan Tadhav's execution showed.

States may refuse jurisdiction, and enforcement passes through the UNSC, where a P-5 member can veto it. The US & Israel have openly refused to comply; over Ukraine, as Prabhash Ranjan argues Russia can veto enforcement against itself.

Consent therefore loosens the Court's grip where the stakes are highest. It remains the archetype of international adjudication, the most far-reaching attempt to apply the rule of law between states.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2023 · 20 marks

Discuss the structure and functions of UN Security Council.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 Charter's primary responsibility for peace and security → only organ whose decisions bind → but structure decides when those powers can be used

R2 composition settled in 1945, veto sitting inside it → structure and functions are not two lists but one relation

Body flow

15 members: 5 permanent + nuclear-armed / 10 non-permanent, GA-elected, two-year terms → veto blocks substantive decision = "Great Power unanimity" → functions from persuasion to force: settle peacefully / principles of settlement / mediation / SG investigation → ceasefire → peacekeeping troops or observers with consent → decisions bind, enforceable by sanctions or force under collective security (aggression against one = assault on all) → but powers move only on P5 agreement: Korea 1950 (only because USSR was boycotting), Kuwait 1991 → paralysis when interests clash: Cold War, Rwanda, Bosnia, Syria, Ukraine → same structure breeds the critique: no permanent seat for Africa or Latin America, "secretive and undemocratic" → **Edward Luck**: credibility ← membership tracking geopolitical and demographic shifts → G4 / Ezulwini / L69

Counter-view

the flaws are not a case against the Council → they mark the reforms it needs, not its uselessness

Conclusion routes

R1 functions are wide, but work only as the structure allows → **Vajpayee**: the UN is as effective as members allow

R2 composition and veto are the precondition for function → until they change, the Council acts only where the great powers already agree

The charter gives the UNSC primary responsibility for international peace & security, & its decisions alone bind members. Its composition settled in 1945, decides when those powers can be used.

The council has 15 members. 5 are permanent & nuclear armed: China, France, the Russian Federation, the UK & the US. 10 non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. A negative vote by any permanent member blocks a substantive decision, the charter's rule of "Great Power unanimity."

Its functions run from persuasion to force. It asks parties to settle peacefully, sets out principles of settlement or mediates & may direct the Secretary-General to investigate and report. Once fighting begins it works for a ceasefire and, with the parties' consent, sends peacekeeping troops or observes to separate combatants. Unlike Assembly resolutions, its decisions bind and are enforceable by sanctions or military action under collective security: aggression against one member is an assault on all.

These powers move only when the PS agree. Korea in 1950 was the one decisive intervention, possible because the Soviet Union was boycotting the Council; in 1991 it authorised the force that liberated Kuwait. Where PS interests clash it stalls: the Cold war, then Rwanda, Bosnia, Syria and Ukraine.

The critique argues that no permanent seat for Africa or Latin America, and the charge of being "secretive & undemocratic". According to Edward Luck, credibility depends on adapting membership to geopolitical & demographic shifts, as the G4, Ezulwini Consensus and L69 demand. The flaws do not make the Council useless; they mark the reforms it needs.

The functions are wide and they work only as the structure allows. As A.B. Vajpayee said, "the UN can be as effective as its members allow it to be."

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